

Siddha Marg



LOOK TO GOD RESIDING IN THE SKY OF THE HEART.

BHAGAVAN NITYĀNANDA*

Yoga has always declared that the nonphysical space of the heart is where Consciousness dwells. Science is now coming to see this, too.

So much is going on in our hearts and minds. So much stuff has been stored within us over lifetimes. For this reason, the heart has to be cleansed, purified.

How do we purify the heart? Through all the practices we do: chanting, meditating, study, contemplation.

MAHĀMANDALESHWAR SWAMI NITYĀNANDA

* *The Sky of the Heart*, Rudra Press, 1996, p. 212.

Mahāmandaleshwar Swami Nityānanda has invited everyone to study Reflections of the Self, by Baba Muktānanda, during 2012. This issue of Siddha Marg features a talk Gurudev gave this spring upon his arrival at Shanti Mandir in Walden, New York. In it, he offers his commentary on a verse from this book by Baba.

Remain Connected at All Times

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ith great respect and love, I welcome you all with all my heart to *satsaṅg* here this morning in the Namasté building. Namasté!

As I was having breakfast, looking out the window at the people arriving and those going for breakfast, I was thinking about our *satsaṅg*. Seeing each other after six months or so, where do we begin? Of course, our subject this year is *Reflections of the Self*. Baba wrote this book in 1980 at the end of his third world tour, and it isn't so readily available now.

Just thinking of the title, we can come to the realization that everything is nothing but a reflection of the Self. Yet seeing the world around us as a reflection of the Self isn't that easy because we filter everything through our mind. Like a mirror, our mind tells us how we should perceive things. It is through the mind that most of us operate in life.

A sage teaches us to simply put the mind away.

I've been reading Hafiz the last few nights since I have come. His poetry is a reminder that we must get ourselves into a state of oneness, of understanding, like that in which the sages and poet saints live.

Remain Connected at All Times (continued)

Of course, we may feel and believe we are in the experience of the Self already. But then we stand back and look at ourselves and at how we have operated or how we have dealt with some things. And we realize we did what we did because we were disconnected from the Self.

So the question arises, how do we remain connected at all times? This is probably something we all contemplate.

As we chanted yesterday from 10 am to 6 pm, if you looked around the room, you saw everybody immersed. Everybody was lost in the chant. Yet every so often, you could look at somebody and see a trickle of thoughts come in. Their body would stop swaying. Or their smile would disappear. The beat would go off. Because all of a sudden their mind was back.

When you read the *Mahābhārata*, the *Chandi Pāṭh*, the *Rāmāyāna*, or the various other Indian epics, there is always a battle. There is always a fight between the good fellows and the bad fellows. And you wonder, who is the good fellow and who is the bad fellow? But in fact, the biggest war takes place within yourself every single day. We don't want to acknowledge that, but all the forces within us are at war every day.

Imagine if you woke up each morning totally still, totally calm, with the understanding that everything is an expression of the Self. Life might get boring, no? Of course, if you've been to enough satsaṅgs, you'll have come to the realization that there is nothing but the Self, so it can't be boring. But the truth is in our daily experience, and in whether we are able to live like that.

I'll share a great story that I've often shared.

Two monks live together peacefully, happily, joyously for a long time. The young monk one day feels that they

should be more normal. So he tells the older monk, "Let's be normal."

The older monk says, "How can we be normal?"

The other says, "Look at this piece of gold. I'll put it between the two of us and say it's mine. You say it's yours. I'll say it's mine, and you say it's yours. Soon we'll have a fight. That's normal."

So the older monk says, "This is mine."

The younger monk says, "No, this is mine."

The older monk says, "This is mine."

The younger monk says, "This is mine."

The older monk says, "If this is yours, then take it!"

Imagine if each day when situations like this occur for us, we simply said, "It's yours. Take it. Maybe your need is greater."

But we say, "No, no! Wait a minute. I'm still paying the bank." Or we say, "No, I have insurance on it."

Have you seen what happens when somebody bangs into somebody on the freeway? The person doesn't simply get out and say, "Well, it happened." No. The person kicks the tire. The mouth moves. The face goes through so many looks.

Nothing can be undone. You can't go back to a minute or two minutes earlier and say, "Stop the car! I'm going to brake." It's done!

Yet in that very moment, if you could remember the Self, you'd have got it. Until you can remember that, it is simply fiction, a piece of information in your head that

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hasn't actually come to pass. You're still struggling with it. You're still not sure. You're still not established in the direct experience at all times that, yes, all of this is nothing but the Self.

We all have done many things over many lifetimes. If we believe the philosophy of Vedānta, we have lived as eight million, four hundred thousand species. As a mosquito we have bit a few people. As a scorpion we have bit a few people. As a cobra we have bit a few people. As a dog we have bit a few people. As a human we also have done a few things.

When you go to a body worker, he says, "Release that."

And you ask, "How?"

He says, "Just let go."

You say, "Don't press so hard! It hurts!"

He asks, "What are you holding?" And you hear a loud crunching sound as he says, "Ah, release."

But then you ask yourself, "What am I carrying? What are all these *saṃskāras*, these *vāsanās* – impressions stored within myself – that light up every time a situation occurs in life? How come in that moment I forget the Self? How come I forget about the reflections of the Self?"

In *Reflections of the Self*, Baba says, "Honor stability, goodwill, and courage. Deepen your wisdom and endurance. Never renounce justice. Befriend faith and trust. These eight qualities are truly your friends. They uplift you and dispel fear."¹

Let's look at the first one: honor stability.

Baba is talking about *sthiram*, stability. A *sūtra* of Patañjali that I like is *Sthiram sukham āsanam*. "Our posture should be stable and comfortable."

Now ask yourself, "How stable am I?"

Most of us would have to say, "I'm not that stable." Especially in our society and times today, we don't view stability as a good quality one has to have. We think of stability as boring, right? My experience from traveling the world is that when people think of somebody who has been doing the same thing for a whole lifetime, they see it as boring.

Imagine a good person doing good things, always doing the right thing according to his or her place in life. That is an external experience of stability. However, true stability has to come about because the person has stability within.

Now ask yourself, "How can I bring about *sthiram*, stability, in my life?"

The first place I would go is the mind. The mind has to have stability. The mind has to have stillness. *Sthiram* also means to become still. If the mind doesn't have stability or stillness, we are floundering.

Next is goodwill. Always wish others well.

The Vedas tell us, "O my mind, always have noble thoughts." Whenever you see others, wish them well. It doesn't matter if you don't like them. Especially those.

We always say, "May my friends be well." What about our enemies? We create duality when we say, "May my friends, may my family, may those I love..." Why add that pronoun, my? Can't we just say, as the sages say, *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*, "May all beings be content"?

**Honor stability,
goodwill, and
courage.**

1. Swami Muktananda, *Reflections of the Self*, Part 2, verse 38, SYDA Foundation, 1980, p. 113.

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If we say, “May my friends be content, may my loved ones be content, may my family be content,” it means we unconsciously want others not to be content. Why don’t we just say “all”? And I always say, “Remember you are included automatically in the ‘all.’”

Don’t think, “What about me, then? If I pray for everyone, who is praying for me?” You are praying for yourself when you pray for everyone. When the sages say *sarve* (everyone, all beings), *sarve* is all-inclusive.

Take your mind to that place where it always wishes well. Again, the very first thing is that it has to wish well for itself. Because a mind that doesn’t wish well for itself cannot wish well for others. Therefore, I have to wish well for myself.

We think of Baba’s teaching, “Honor yourself, respect yourself, worship yourself.” When I come to that place within myself where I honor, worship, and respect myself, then automatically the outcome of that thought process is that I will honor, worship, and respect others.

Honor courage. Courage comes when we are fearless. When we do not have fear, we have courage. Having courage means all our actions in life have to be good. Everything we do must be honorable and respectable. Never should the actions we are performing have dubious or devious thought processes behind them.

Don’t think courage just comes from benching 220 pounds, that it comes if you get whatever belt in karate. That is merely physical or external courage. The courage the sages talk about is internal courage. It is a state of total fearlessness, a state within yourself where there is never a palpitation of heart, we would say.

Baba says, “Honor stability, honor goodwill, honor courage. Deepen your wisdom and endurance.”

Now you say, “How do I deepen wisdom?”

First of all, you have to go to a lot of satsaṅgs. Satsaṅg is something we all can make part of our life. In Baba’s time, it was wonderful to hear that satsaṅg happened at least once a week in 350 homes. Whether it was a Thursday or a Tuesday or a Saturday or a Sunday, some individual took the initiative to have satsaṅg in his living room.

Of course, everybody who is preparing a space for satsaṅg thinks, “Who’s coming? Who’s coming? Who’s coming?”

But I say, “You are there.” Because they forget that satsaṅg is for them. Whoever else comes is a bonus.

I always say satsaṅg is of two types: satsaṅg is for the individual, and satsaṅg is for the group. Individual satsaṅg is what I do each and every day as my practice. Without doubt, I must do it every day. Group satsaṅg is when we gather once a week, or once every fifteen days. It’s a great way to see how stable we are, how wise we are, how much goodwill we’ve developed. If we see any people not chanting or not meditating or not doing what they should be doing, can we simply think, “They have come. It is enough that they’ve come.”

They have brought themselves there and they sit and just allow themselves to listen, listen, listen. This is how wisdom deepens.

Baba made me a monk in 1980. The first year or two were filled with the excitement of these robes, of being a monk, yet not really understanding what it is to be a monk. Baba took *samādhi* in 1982. The next three years

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also held a lot of excitement, doing his work, traveling around the world. And life had its ups and downs. The ten years that followed were looking at and asking and beginning to understand: What am I doing? What is all of this?

Gradually I came to an inner understanding of what it is. And then there was settling in with that understanding.

You can't just say, "I am the Self, I am the Absolute, I am the Truth" and expect immediately to become established in knowing what that means. Though you still may not be able to express it or explain it to anyone else, at least you should come to understand within yourself what that statement means.

Then try to operate in life from that place of "I am the Self." Many external things will happen in life; nevertheless, remain established in that place.

Then, like I said, if a car bangs into you, somebody bangs into you, or everything bangs into you, you just remain with "I am the Self." You remember the reflections of the Self. You don't kick the tire. You don't kick anyone else. You don't need to say anything.

Some people say *svāhā*. That means there's still a little bit to let go. Some people repeat the mantra. That means there is still a little bit of attachment. Some people say, "Remember the teachings."

Until you are established in the Self, remember that wisdom has to be deepened. Wisdom has to become part of you. If I take a knife or a pin and punch it into my skin, blood will come gushing out. Knowledge has to become like that. So when a situation occurs in life, wisdom is instantly there. Nobody has to remind you. You don't have to remind yourself. The wisdom is part and parcel

of you. Every cell and every pore of your being has that wisdom. Whenever you need it, it comes gushing out.

Baba reminds us that we may know the Self, but the person to whom we are talking may not yet be in that place of knowing the Self. Even if one percent of people have become awake and aware, there are still ninety-nine percent who are not awake and aware.

That reminds me of a funny story about Mullah Nasruddin. He gives a course on walking in the dark. And the next day he is out walking with a lantern.

So a person who has taken the course asks him, "What is the lantern for if you know how to walk in the dark?"

He says, "It's for those who don't see me when I am walking."

Of course this is a double-sided story. I have to remember that if I'm walking straight and somebody is walking toward me, though both of us are the Self, if the other person doesn't see me coming, I need to move out of the way. Otherwise he will bump into me. So, in this case, "deepen your wisdom" means not being stupid.

Deepen your endurance. That's a tough one. Everybody feels he or she is enduring. And when it comes to what we do in life, many of us are enduring. But think about what happens. You bring yourself to a place where you feel, "Now life is how I would like it to be. I just pray God keeps it like that."

Then you wake up the next morning. Exactly that which you didn't want happens. What does it do? It shakes you up. Suddenly your endurance is floundering. You say, "I was good till yesterday. I endured till yesterday."

That means God thinks your endurance needs to be tested.

**Deepen your wisdom
and endurance.**

Remain Connected at All Times (continued)

Never renounce justice. As we look around at life, we always think God is not fair. Right? Because if it went the way we wanted it to, the way we thought it should be, then God would be fair.

Many people around here play the lotto. And it always seems it's the other person who wins. Yesterday I was reading about a lady who won twice. She had two winning tickets for the same lotto. Ah, God!

The sages tell us that until one becomes comfortable in one's physical life, one is not going to look for God. One isn't interested in God, one is only interested in how to take care of oneself.

Yet it often seems we suddenly become interested when something uncomfortable happens. For example, a young woman in India who is about thirty years old lost her husband recently. For the last two or three months, she has been coming to the ashram in Magod every day. She sits in the temple and prays and chants. In her mind, she asks, "Why, why, why?" She's asking God for justice. She's asking God to explain to her.

We don't have to wait for someone in our life to die to ask why. We don't have to lose something to come to a place of understanding within ourselves. We can begin that quest now. You may say, "I have begun that quest." Having begun that quest, you can deepen it.

Only then will satsaṅg be fun. Otherwise we will meet every Sunday and it will be like giving a high five, and then high five again, and going home. You won't process and internalize anything. You won't, as Baba says, deepen the wisdom.

As somebody wrote me recently, when we are young, life seems like it's forever. As we get older, life becomes a flash.

It's the same with all of this knowledge. When we are young, we try to figure out what the sage is telling us. As we go along, we realize the teachings are for us to use and apply in our life. I can't worry about what is happening outside of myself, I can only look at myself.

When Rumi or Baba or Hafiz or Tukārām Mahārāj or Mīrābāi or the other poet saints write, they only write about their experience. They wish to share their understanding with us in the hope that as we read, as we contemplate, as we ponder, we may come to that place within ourselves also.

If somebody reads Rumi, somebody reads Hafiz, somebody reads Kabīr, somebody reads Mīrābāi, they should immediately be able to say, "I know that because I experience that. I don't know that because these are words. I don't know that because I've read it somewhere. I know that because I live in that experience."

This only comes about when you put forth effort every single day. Otherwise it is simply a wonderful thought from the book. It is simply a wonderful thought that you've written down in your notebook. It is simply a wonderful thought like a CD that you have recorded in your mind. It is not a direct experience of yours.

Baba says, "Befriend faith and trust."

A couple of years ago we touched upon *śraddhā*. It takes a lot to be faithful. It is interesting that Baba puts trust together with faith. That means we have to have trust in order to have faith. We have to have faith in order to have trust. And here he says to befriend them. Though he doesn't state it explicitly, I would add that he is telling us to become free of doubt. When we have faith and trust, we do not have doubt. When we have doubt, we don't have faith and trust.

Every cell and every pore of your being has that wisdom. Whenever you need it, it comes gushing out.

Remain Connected at All Times (continued)

Going back to stability, stability brings faith and trust. Stability does not bring doubt, does not bring questions. Because it is stable. Thus, having become stable, we befriend faith and trust.

Both of these are great qualities in life. I have come to the understanding that faith is something that slowly grows. As we ponder and question – not with doubt, but with wanting to understand more, to bring clarity into the mind – faith grows along with it. And as faith grows, we begin to trust.

When we say, “I believe in God, I believe in Truth, I believe in Self,” we have to have faith and trust in their existence.

Baba says these eight qualities are truly your friends. They uplift you and dispel fear. Living with Baba, we realized of course that our goal was experience of the Self. Our goal was realization and understanding of the Self. But to get there, there were many things we had to do.

In *Reflections of the Self*, Baba tells you how to keep your mind. He tells you how to eat and what to eat. He tells you how you should be at all times. Slowly, as you contemplate these things, you will come to the experience of reflections of the Self.



Befriend faith and trust.

G L O S S A R Y

Chaṇḍī Pāṭh

Sanskrit mantras to the goddess

Hafiz

[1325-1389] Sufi poet saint

Kabīr

[1440-1518] poet-saint and weaver

Mahābhārata

Hindu scripture

Mīrābāī

[1498-1547] poet saint and queen

namasté

I offer my salutations to the divine within you.

Patañjali[2nd c BCE] author of the *Yoga Sūtras**Rāmāyāna*

Hindu scripture, tells the story of Rām

Rumi, Jalalu'd-Din

[1139-1173] Sufi poet saint

samādhi

union with the Absolute

saṁskāra

latent impression

satsaṅg

in the company of a knower of the Truth (saint)

śakti

the creative energy of the universe

Śiva

Hindu deity, the primordial Guru

śraddhā

faith

sthiram

stability

sūtra

aphorism, verse

svāhā

so be it, literally, "I surrender it to the Self"

Tukārām Mahārāj

[1608-1650] poet saint

vāsanā

habitual tendencies of the mind

Vedānta

philosophy based on the Vedas

